

04-06

STATEMENT OF POLICY

Health Department Accreditation

Policy

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO):

- Supports the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) voluntary national accreditation program to continuously improve the performance of local health departments;
- Encourages local health departments to engage in accreditation and reaccreditation activities as part of their performance improvement efforts;
- Supports ongoing research to determine whether PHAB's structure and processes drive continuous improvement in local health department performance, including small and under-resourced health departments, and to investigate the link among accredited health departments, greater efficiencies, and improved health outcomes;
- Supports an accreditation program that encourages all health departments, regardless of size, structure, or governance, to improve their performance through the standards and review process;
- Supports affordable accreditation fees for local health departments;
- Encourages PHAB to revise all aspects of the accreditation program, when appropriate, as part of its own ongoing continuous quality improvement process, including continued dialogue with stakeholders and sharing of research findings;
- Promotes increased, sustained, and sufficient financial and other investments in local health departments as a means to build capacity, workforce, and agency infrastructure;
- Promotes the development and provision of incentives to encourage application to PHAB, efforts to align with and meet PHAB standards, and benefits to accredited health departments without penalty to non-accredited health departments and;
- Encourages the continued support of national partner organizations to provide technical support and assistance to health departments.

Justification

The PHAB voluntary national accreditation program supports continuous improvement in the performance of local health departments and to demonstrate a form of public accountability to governing bodies, policymakers, and communities served.¹⁻⁴

Accreditation should be considered as an investment by local health departments and their governing entities. Studies of accreditation's impacts demonstrate numerous benefits reported by accredited health departments, including increased engagement in quality improvement, strengthened internal processes, and improved accountability.



PHAB launched its voluntary national accreditation program in September 2011. The movement towards this program was driven by several factors, including two IOM reports, *The Future of Public Health* (1988) and *The Future of Public Health in the 21st Century* (2002), both of which encouraged accreditation as a way to strengthen governmental public health infrastructure.^{6,7} The IOM report *For the Public's Health: Revitalizing Law and Policy to Meet New Challenges* (2011) and the more recent Public Health 3.0 guidance (2017) include a recommendation for public health accreditation through PHAB's program.^{8,9} Since accreditation is awarded for five years, the first health departments were awarded reaccreditation in 2019. NACCHO supports local health departments in continuing their progress gained in initial accreditation by achieving reaccreditation.

NACCHO has supported the movement towards accreditation for many years as part of a desire to promote the consistency of and accountability for the delivery and provision of services by local health departments. This support included the development of the *Blueprint for a Healthy Community: A Guide for Local Health Departments* and the *Operational Definition of a Functional Local Health Department*; participation in the Steering Committee for the *Exploring Accreditation* report; and backing the establishment of PHAB in 2007, in conjunction with the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, the National Association of Local Boards of Health, and the American Public Health Association.^{11,12,4}

NACCHO supports PHAB and its goals to improve and protect the public's health through continuous quality improvement, with the hope that future research will confirm the link between accreditation and improved health outcomes. NACCHO supports PHAB's efforts to explore the link between reaccreditation and population health outcomes in an effort to better describe the contribution that local health departments make to improve the health of their communities.¹²

NACCHO recognizes the potential for local health departments to leverage other national initiatives, including the IRS Community Benefit regulations, Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships, Project Public Health Ready, and Healthy People, to assist them in building partnerships and aligning current work with accreditation.¹³

References

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Record of Action

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